

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Chief Technology Officer



Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
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Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Before the
Committee on Government Operations
The Honorable Brandon Todd, Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia

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Via Web Conference
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairman Todd, members of the Committee on Government Operations, staff and members of the public. I am Lindsey Parker, Chief Technology Officer for DC Government.

I am pleased to be joined by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) Chief of Staff Carol Harrison, Deputy Chief of Staff Tehsin Faruk, and Agency Fiscal Officer Phil Peng, to testify today on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Budget and Financial Plan.

At OCTO, we run DC Government's 800+ mile fiber network connecting more than 650 government buildings; and support DC Government employees' computers, phones and mobile devices. Every year our platforms handle more than 70 million emails, 500,000 procurement transactions, employment records, benefits, time and attendance and payroll for 37,000 employees. Our DC.gov websites receive more than 25 million visits annually; and we manage to detect and mitigate almost one billion cyber incidents per year.

But if you ask me to guess what some of these stats might look like next year, I would be hard pressed to respond. In this very uncertain moment, the one thing I can tell you without any hesitation... I had no idea a year ago that we would be depending on OCTO's DC Net infrastructure to host a virtual hearing to discuss Mayor Bowser's budget in my second year as CTO.

Instead, I was hoping to share with you the first ever Technology Strategic Plan for DC Government. A plan that calls out the need to keep up with the private sector. I would have

referenced that residents are demanding more digital ways to interact with government; businesses want simpler ways to get their permits and manage their employees; and visitors want to get around quickly while staying connected. At the same time, cybersecurity threats are real and growing, like we saw in January with Iran.

Turns out we did put together a strategic plan – you can still check it out in its draft form at techplan.dc.gov – and it includes a line that is even more prescient today than when we released the draft at the beginning of 2020: *“Because the world is changing, we know that without a real focus on technology, DC will fall behind.”*

Covid-19 is radically accelerating that digital future and I am proud to say that OCTO remains ready to lead and support DC Government through that transition. But as we transform digitally, we must do more to ensure that our residents and our DC Government employees aren’t left behind.

[SLIDE 1]

My hope during this testimony is to impress upon you, the Council and the public: how OCTO has continued to support DC Government operations during this Covid-19 response, what we learned during this heavily tech-dependent time, and how we will move forward with the Mayor’s budget allocation – including our work to finding 3-5% savings in technology spend city wide.

[SLIDE 2]

Just prior to the Mayor's stay-at-home order taking effect, the OCTO Leadership team met on a Saturday to determine how we would work together to meet the needs of our customer agencies. Our posture continues today with most of our team working productively from home, with the exception of the following key teams who continue to safely report into work sites: our data center team continues to ensure our systems housed in the data center are operational, our fiber engineers who help build and maintain the network that transports the data we are exchanging right now, the voice technicians who ensure that phone calls and contact centers continue operating even while call takers are working remotely and IT support technicians at OCTO helps who make sure the technology we use day-to-day, like our computers, remains functional.

We established OCTO's Covid-19 Response team and set daily morning meetings to check in on agency requests, prioritize our work and update one another on project status. We established four weekly calls every Wednesday to check in with our entire leadership team, OCTO all hands, agency CIOs and industry partners.

We focused our efforts to ensure the following five core areas were prioritized:

1. Continuity of DC Government agency operations – to ensure needed services and functions could continue operating;
2. Public and other stakeholder communication – because we know that 80% of Internet users look online to receive health information and provide feedback;
3. Data integration and visualization – so we could better understand what the data is telling us about how we are performing;

4. Digital transformation – helping create systems and automated processes so DC Government employees don't have to rely on paper and excel spreadsheets to get the work done; and,
5. Supporting the agencies leading the health response during this public health emergency, including DC Health, Department of Forensic Sciences, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the public safety agencies.

With these focus areas in mind, our team has:

- Established a **Remote Work Portal** to help employees working from home for the first time (newly updated)
- Built and maintains **coronavirus.dc.gov**, including the **data dashboards**
- Continues to turn around **surveys** and **electronic forms** each day, including the just closed survey for both parents of traditional and charter school students to tell us about their experiences and hopes with e-learning as well as the ReOpen DC Advisory Group and public surveys.
- Stood up and continue to support remote call centers, including **DC's Coronavirus Hotline**, which you can reach by **calling 311 and pressing #**
- Allow for more than 60% of DC Government to securely access critical applications, including email and virtual conference tools, remotely
- Find suppliers, including many CBEs, of laptops and other devices, despite supply chain challenges

I am incredibly proud of the dedication, hard work and long hours served by the entire team at OCTO – and am pleased to say that we have reliably delivered the tools DC government employees need to operate during this response in a more collaborative, secure and optimized way. We continue to receive **good ideas from our industry partners at covid19ideas.dc.gov** that we use to help support new requests that come in to help reopen DC.

[SLIDE 3]

I continue to be impressed by what the OCTO team can accomplish with oftentimes little notice and even less information about expectations. In this high-stakes moment, we've learned a lot about ourselves, our teams and our customers. We've relied on some tried and true processes to get the work done, but have built new ways of working, as well. In an effort to not forget what we've learned, I held meetings with each of our teams to discuss and reflect on these questions.

[SLIDE 4: What We Learned]

I think even our client agencies were surprised by the speed at which we were able to help DC Government employees work from home. CIOs were proud of the flexibility of their colleagues to try something different. And while, at the beginning of the response, we saw a record-setting reliance on our IT Service Desk, OCTOhelps - with questions like “what is VPN?” coming in - we quickly returned to status quo after including answers to some of the more common questions on our Remote Work Portal.

Our communications teams produced more trainings, self-help guides and videos in the past few months than ever before, including providing a self-help portal with WebEx trainings for ANC

Commissioners. And that's exactly what our team and agency CIOs continue to ask for more of – an easy-to-search knowledge center that provides answers to top of mind technology questions, how to find help and a better understanding of how OCTO works and what we offer.

I know at OCTO, we've seen our team's productivity increase working remotely, many pointing to some of our collaboration tools in helping do so, like Teams and WebEx. Additionally, many team members have suggested that our work would be further improved if we relied on a **centralized project management system** to track tasks and requests, giving us better visibility on the status and priority of our requests.

Empowering our customers to find answers to their questions and provide them a better understanding how and what OCTO delivers is paramount to our strategic plan – and will help with another common suggestion from the team – allowing us to spend less time fighting fires and more time focused on refining and achieving set goals.

[SLIDE 5: How We Move Forward]

In order to realize the vision and mission set out in the Tech Plan – of *'unleashing the possible in the digital age'* by providing **valued services, advising agencies** and **collaboratively governing IT** – and given what we learned about ourselves and our customers needs, and the budget realities we are faced with – we, at OCTO, know we must do more with less by working smarter together.

First, we will work to better structure our organization in a way that makes sense to our customers. Rather than an organization made up of six silos, we will work together to find ways to organize ourselves into two – one focused on the traditional IT operations everyone is accustomed to needing from infrastructure to your employee’s workspace and the other focused on the new systems and tools needed to automate and optimize government services.

This will allow us to better understand and prioritize what is being asked of us – and it will allow us to cross train team members on the services, processes and systems we use to get the job done. ***Instead of having to send representatives from three or four siloes of our organization to meet with an agency to understand the scope of project, we might only need to send one representative who can capture all the intake information needed.***

Reorganization takes time, but we will use that time to shore up our competency in working together by documenting our processes and streamlining them. We will use those newly documented processes to build an easy-to-search knowledge center so our customers can answer their own questions and be better prepared when they need a new service or solution from OCTO.

We will also finish building out our financial model, so we will be able to provide our customers with a better understanding of what our services cost and why.

With processes documented, a knowledge center in the works and a financial model, we will be able to provide the government clusters an understanding of what services they are using today

and how together we can come up with a plan for tomorrow. We've started this cluster-focused conversation with the CIOs as we pulled together the latest budget requests. With a cluster-focused plan in mind, we are looking to find 3-5% savings in the technology spend city-wide, so we can implement a review board that uses those savings to invest in the technologies we will need moving forward.

This will also allow us greater understanding of what we will need to procure as a government – which will allow us to use our combined purchasing power to set up better enterprise contracts (lower pricing) and provides our industry partners exactly what they want... better predictability in such an uncertain market.

Covid-19 is radically accelerating that digital future and I am proud to say that OCTO remains ready to lead and support DC Government through that transition. But as we transform digitally, we must do more to ensure that our residents and our DC Government employees aren't left behind.

[SLIDE 6]

The COVID pandemic only served to further amplify the urgent need for bridging the digital divide in DC. During the recent stay-at-home order, residents without regular access and training on computer and internet usage were at a severe disadvantage as schools held classes online, job applications and interviews were conducted online, and government announcements

and services were made available online. As Mayor Bowser has charged, during our reopening we must find **more equitable and better ways to move forward.**

While you might not see the dollars reflected in this budget, we know that industry partners, philanthropic organizations and federal grant programs have a renewed interest in investing in bridging the digital divide. Doing so embodies each of our shared #DCHOPE values – by allowing for more tele**health** options for seniors, **opportunities** for unemployed residents looking for new careers, **prosperity** for the city as a skilled tech workforce attracts more economic development and **equity** in what students and jobseekers are able to access.

We plan to re-envision our Smarter DC and Connect DC goals to align with the four focus areas you see on the slide, since we can't be smarter until we all are connected. The #TechTogether Partnership will bring industry leaders, small businesses, philanthropic groups and universities together to sign up for a menu of options within each of the four areas that will help bridge the digital divide through:

1. Increasing access to internet service
2. Increasing access to internet-enabled devices and support
3. Demystifying technology through awareness, training and access to opportunities
4. Increasing technology savviness within DC Government

I look forward to releasing more on this important work soon, understanding that we have stood up a team at OCTO to pursue partnerships and apply for grant dollars to make this happen.

[SLIDE 7]

I don't have to tell you about the financial impact the current public health emergency has had on the budget.

[SLIDE 8]

Mayor Bowser shared a thoughtful perspective on how her Administration came up with almost \$800 million in cuts for FY21.

[SLIDE 9]

By asking all of us to make sacrifices. We took that as a challenge at OCTO to do more with less by working smarter together.

[SLIDE 10]

The Mayor's FY21 proposed budget for the Office of the Chief Technology (OCTO) includes \$119.13 million in operating funds and \$11.57 million in capital funds. The proposed FY 2021 gross budget represents a 1.3 percent decrease from the FY 2020 budget.

[SLIDE 11]

This includes:

- Reduced discretionary spending for IT consultants by \$3.2M, which we will accomplish through the new ways of working discussed earlier, enabling us to find 3-5% savings across our technology spend in the city.

- Reduced the GIS & Data Analytics Program by \$2.7M, which we will accomplish by completing the financial model I discussed earlier so that agencies understand and see the value in the services they rely on
- Reduced Special Purpose Revenue fund balance by \$2.1M, which we will replace by finding new federal and nonprofit DC Net customers

[SLIDE 12]

We will continue our ongoing capital projects to provide more secure and user focused services to agencies:

- Directory Services Modernization
- Citywide IT Security Initiative
- Disaster Recovery & Coop Implementation
- Data Privacy & Anonymization
- Core Infrastructure Network Upgrade
- Human Capital Management Enterprise Application Modernization

And we will utilize the cyber security enhancements to improve our cyber risk management model going forward, as we work to keep up with the ever-changing threats and challenges of keeping people and information secure in our growing digital world.

Covid-19 is radically accelerating that digital future and I am proud to say that OCTO remains ready to unleash what's possible for DC Government as we move forward. I'm happy to take any questions at this time.